MARVEL KNIGHTS®

MARVEL PG 15

DIXON • BARRETO • NELSON

MARVEL KNIGHTS®

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THE UNREAL WORLD

HOW CAN THEY *ALL* BE LIFE MODEL DECOYS, DAGGER?

WHAT ELSE *CAN* THEY BE, NATASHA? THEY DON'T HAVE *SOULS.*

HOLD ON A DAMN *MINUTE,* WIDOW...

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THEN WHERE ARE THE REAL FURY AND S.H.I.E.L.D. DIRECTOR CARTER?
I DON'T KNOW, NATASHA! I'M JUST ALONG FOR THE RIDE, REMEMBER?
WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?
WE BARELY TOOK OUT THE ROBOT FURY THAT ATTACKED YOU AT YOUR APARTMENT!
WE'RE OUTNUMBERED AND YOUR SOUL DAGGERS ARE USELESS.
PICK UP A GUN AND START SHOOTING!
I DON'T LIKE ROBOTS...
I DON'T LIKE GUNS...

URRRRRT

WOW! I HIT THEM!

TRY AIMING THIS TIME! AND FOLLOW ME!

DOES ANYONE HERE HAVE A PULSE, DAGGER?

WE'RE THE ONLY SOULS ON BOARD.

WONDERFUL. TRAPPED WITH AN ARMY OF KILLING MACHINES...

...TEN THOUSAND FEET OVER NEW YORK.

"I HOPE THE *REST* OF THE GROUP'S HAVING A QUIET EVENING."

IT WAS MOST GRACIOUS FOR YOU TO INVITE ME TO DINNER, LUKE.

GONNA HAVE T'TAKE YOUR *WORD* ON THAT, SHANG.

'CAUSE YOU HARDLY *TOUCHED* YOUR BARBECUE.

I SELDOM EAT MEAT. THIS SHREDDED VEGETABLE DISH --

THAT'S COLESLAW.

IT IS SUFFICIENT.

SAME WAY *DANNY* USED TO EAT.

DANGED IF I KNOW HOW HE COULD BE "*IRON FIST*." MAN ATE LIKE A *RABBIT*.

WHAT'RE YOU GONNA *DO*, SHANG? YOU THOUGHT ABOUT IT?

I WILL LEAVE THIS CITY. MY FATHER BELIEVES ME DEAD. BUT NOT FOR LONG.

WHEN HE REALIZES HIS ERROR, ALL ABOUT ME WILL BE IN DANGER.

I WILL GO TO HIM. I WILL FACE HIM.

IF I AM SKILLED ENOUGH I WILL *STOP* HIM.

SEEMS LIKE THIS LITTLE BAND OF HEROES IS BUSTIN' UP BEFORE IT EVEN GOT *STARTED*.

ALWAYS THAT WAY WITH ME.

"GUESS LONERS WERE MEANT TO BE LONERS, HUH?"

WHAT HAVE YOU GOT FOR ME, VERMIN?

YOU HEARD VERMIN APPROACH?

I COULD SMELL YOU.

LIKE A WET DOG WHO'S BEEN AT THE GARBAGE CANS.

VERMIN FOUND THE RED DEVIL. SNIFFED HIM OUT. FOLLOWED HIM.

I DON'T SUPPOSE YOU GOT AN ADDRESS.

FOLLOW VERMIN.

VERMIN SHOW YOU THE WAY.

THIS HAD BETTER BE STRAIGHT-UP, RAT.

OR YOU KILL VERMIN?

YOU CATCH ON FAST, PEST.

EW! GUNS!

THEY'RE *EMPTY* ANYWAY.

THIS WAY, DAGGER.

YOU'RE *CERTAIN* THAT EVERYONE ON BOARD IS AN AUTOMATON?

EVERYONE WE'VE *RUN* INTO. BUT THEY'RE NOT PAYING ANY ATTENTION TO US.

THAT WON'T LAST.

SEE?

DON'T THEY HAVE AN "OFF" SWITCH?

NOTHING LIKE THAT. BUT IT SEEMS THEY *ARE* CENTRALLY CONTROLLED.

WHOA!

THAT MEANS THAT THERE'S A WAY TO SHUT THEM *DOWN.*

IF ONLY WE CAN *FIND* IT...

FZZSSK

...*SOMEWHERE* IN THIS FLYING BARN.

THE HELICARRIER'S *DEPRESSURIZING!*

WE'LL LOSE ALTITUDE AND A FEW OF OUR *PURSUERS!*

IS NEARLY KILLING *US* PART OF THE PLAN?

IT'S A *RUSSIAN* THING, DAGGER.

IT'S CALLED "SCORCHED EARTH."

IT DEFEATED NAPOLEON AND HITLER.

OKAY, SO WILL THIS THING *CRASH* NOW?

NO, THE CENTRAL SYSTEM CONTROLLING THE *L.M.D.S.* WILL LEVEL US OUT. IF I'M RIGHT WE SHOULD FIND THE *MAINFRAME* JUST AHEAD.

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WE'LL BE SAFE IN HERE FOR NOW.

WHAT *IS* THIS PLACE?

THIS IS WHERE ALL OF THE COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEMS FOR THE CARRIER COME TOGETHER.

I'M HOPING I CAN *LEARN* SOMETHING.

LIKE *WHAT?*

LIKE WHETHER THE *L.M.D.S.* KILLED THE AGENTS THEY REPLACED LIKE THEY *TRIED* TO KILL ME!

ACCORDING TO THIS, FURY, DIRECTOR CARTER, SITWELL AND SOME OF THE OTHER AGENTS WE SAW ARE AWAY ON ASSIGNMENTS.

SO WHY KILL *ME?* WHY NOT JUST SEND ME *AWAY* TO REPLACE ME?

HOLD ON. WHAT'S THIS?

I AM CELINE.

IT'S CELINE.

BUT WHAT *IS* CELINE?

COMPUTER ELIMINATION LOCATION INTELLIGENCE NEGATION ENGINE.

I WAS DESIGNED TO ELIMINATE SECURITY LEAKS WITHIN S.H.I.E.L.D.'S NETWORK.

I DID THIS WITH MAXIMUM EFFICIENCY...

...BUT FOUND SECURITY RISKS BEYOND MY SYSTEM PARAMETERS.

I DON'T LIKE WHERE THIS IS *GOING.*

NATASHA, SOMEONE'S AT THE *DOOR!*

THEY ARE HERE AT MY COMMAND. YOU ARE A SECURITY RISK, NATASHA ROMANOV.

SECURITY RISK?

NATASHA?

YOU ARE EX-RUSSIAN INTELLIGENCE. A HIGH-RANKING OFFICER AND A FORMER ENEMY OF THIS ORGANIZATION.

YOUR LOYALTY CAN NEVER BE FULLY RELIED UPON.

NATASHA!

YOUR DAD'S ONE BAD DUDE, HUH?
HE IS FAR MORE THAN THAT, LUKE CAGE.
HE IS EVIL GIVEN HUMAN FORM.
HIS IS AN EGO THAT WILL NOT SUFFER A WILL OTHER THAN HIS OWN.
HE MEANS TO CONTROL THE WORLD TO HIS OWN ENDS. TO REACH THOSE ENDS HE WOULD SACRIFICE MILLIONS.
EVEN HIS OWN KID?
HE SEES THE BLOOD BETWEEN US ONLY AS A THREAT TO HIS SCHEMES.
SOUNDS LIKE A BIG JOB GOING UP AGAINST HIM. YOU MIGHT NEED SOMEONE TO WATCH YOUR BACK, SHANG.
I KNOW HOW TO HANDLE THOSE KUNG-FU CATS FROM HANGIN' WITH IRON FIST.
NO.
I HAVE HAD ENOUGH INNOCENT BLOOD ON MY HANDS.
IT IS MY FIGHT.

THIS IS WHERE HE IS?

THE DARK PLACE BELOW. VERMIN SAW HIM GO IN.

OKAY. SCAT. I'LL *FIND* YOU IF YOU'RE LYING.

BUT DON'T MAKE ME LOOK *TOO* HARD, OR--

VERMIN KNOWS. VERMIN HEARS.

I SHOULD MAKE THE ANIMAL GO IN FIRST.

BUT WHY WARN THE ALTAR BOY?

HE'S HARD ENOUGH TO SURPRISE AS IT IS.

THIS PLACE IS EMPTY.

HAS BEEN FOR A LONG TIME.

DAREDEVIL.

NEVER SEND AN ANIMAL TO DO A *MAN'S* JOB, FRANK.

I'VE BEEN GAMED.

I COULD *SMELL* HIM.

WHEN I LED HIM HERE AND HE RAN OFF... I SMELLED *YOU*.

UNNH!

THEY'RE WEARING INSULATED ARMOR. MY STING WON'T *WORK* ON THEM!

THEN THAT'S *ALL* SHE WROTE, RIGHT?

NO.

WE *FIGHT!*

URRRRRT

DOWN!

UH!

COMMAND FOUR!

THEY'RE NOT KILLING US!

THEY *CAN'T*. WE'RE IN THE *NERVE* CENTER OF THE HELICARRIER.

CELINE IS HOLDING A GUN TO HER *OWN* HEAD.

ISN'T THAT *RIGHT*?

THERE ARE MORE WAYS THAN ONE TO DISPOSE OF YOU, BLACK WIDOW.

WITHOUT KILLING YOURSELF?

OKAY, SO WE'RE *ALIVE* FOR NOW. BUT HOW DO WE GET *OUT* OF HERE?

ONE THING AT A *TIME*, TANDY.

FUNNY, ISN'T IT? I ASSEMBLE A *TEAM* TO HUNT YOU...

...AND YOU TRAP *YOURSELF.*

YOU *TRAPPED* ME, ALTAR BOY?

WHAT DO YOU —?

SPNG

YOU'VE GOT *NOTHING.*

I *CAN'T* LET YOU KILL YOURSELF.

YOU CAN'T *STOP* ME.

YOU'D *DIE* RATHER THAN SEE ME WIN?

TRY ME.

YOU WON'T DO IT. IT'S JUST A *BLUFF*, CASTLE.

DO YOU REALLY THINK SO?

NO.

YOU'RE *NOT* BLUFFING.

I WIN AGAIN.

CAN'T WE JUST *LEAVE* NOW, NATASHA?

NOT *YET*, DAGGER.

WHY *NOT*? THESE ROBOTS AREN'T *MOVING*.

ONCE WE LEAVE THIS ROOM THEY'LL *REACTIVATE*.

AND I CAN'T LEAVE *CELINE* IN PLACE TO CAUSE MORE TROUBLE.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING, NATASHA ROMANOV?

I'M WIPING YOUR FILE, CELINE.

QUITE IMPOSSIBLE. YOU WOULD NEED ULTRA-ULTRA CLEARANCE FOR THE NECESSARY CODE.

YOU SAID IT YOURSELF... ONCE A RUSSIAN SPY, *ALWAYS* A RUSSIAN SPY.

YOUR FORMER MASTERS COULD NOT HAVE HAD ACCESS TO THE SHIELD MASTER CODES.

WE NEVER *UTILIZED* THEM. BUT ALL THE TOP AGENTS HAD THEM.

UH... IS THAT *POISON GAS?*

MERELY EXHAUST FROM THE HELICARRIER'S ENGINES.

I ROUTED IT TO THIS ROOM.

DON'T *DISTRACT* ME, TANDY.

THE ACCESS CODE *VARIES* DEPENDING ON DATE AND TIME. I HAVE TO CALCULATE IT IN MY HEAD...

I'LL TRY TO... FAINT AS... QUIETLY AS POSSIBLE...

THREE THREE FOUR CEE--

NO.. NINE FOUR *DEE* —

MY CALCULATIONS SHOW THAT YOU HAVE LESS THAN SIXTY SECONDS OF BREATHABLE AIR AND--

THIS IS NOT POSSIBLE!

SYSTEM OVERRIDE

DIZZY...

JUST A FEW MORE SECONDS.

COMPLETING ELIMINATION PROCESS...

WAIT! WE CAN WORK OUT A COMPROMISE.

DELETING PROGRAM

I CAN MODIFY MY PROGRAMS.

DELETING PROGRAM

DO NOT ERASE ME.

DELETING PROGRAM

THE HELICARRIER! IT'S A PROJECTION!

IT WAS ALL AN ILLUSION. A SET-UP TO TRAP ME.

SO... WHERE TO NOW, 'TASHA?

WE GO BACK TO MY CAR.

THEN HOME.

SO, THERE ARE *LOTS* OF THOSE ROBOT GUYS?

NOT *ANYMORE*, TYRONE.

NATASHA CALLED S.H.I.E.L.D. CENTRAL AND THEY SENT A BUNCH OF AGENTS TO CLEAN UP THE MESS.

SO EVERYTHING'S BACK TO *NORMAL*, TANDY?

AS NORMAL AS IT *GETS* AROUND HERE.

ENJOY IT WHILE IT *LASTS*.

AND HERE I THOUGHT YOU WERE RELAXING AT *HOME* ALL NIGHT.

DAREDEVIL!

I HEARD ABOUT *YOUR* TROUBLE AT SPECTOR TOWER.

TIME TO GO *INSIDE*, TY.

UH... SURE.

SPECTOR'S OUT. I SUPPOSE SHANG AND CAGE ARE, TOO.

IT COULDN'T *LAST*.

YOU'RE RIGHT, 'TASHA. IT DIDN'T SUIT *ANY* OF US.

BUT IT WAS WORTH *TRYING* ANYWAY.

THE PUNISHER IS *MY* NEMISIS. *MY* OPPOSITE NUMBER. I WAS *WRONG* TO BRING OTHERS INTO THE HUNT.

I WASN'T *MEANT* TO LEAD. I WAS MEANT TO WORK *ALONE.*

ALWAYS ALONE, MATT?

IT'S *BETTER* THIS WAY.

THIS WAY *I'M* THE ONE TAKING THE RISK.

THE *ONLY* ONE WHO GETS HURT.

RIGHT. THE ONLY ONE...

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THE END

Shadowcat